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Action

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Info

FROM: BONN

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 1671, JANUARY 15, 1962

PRIORITY

ACTION DEPARTMENT 1671, INFORMATION LONDON 451, PARIS 536

EYES ONLY

AS SEEN FROM HERE, AND ON BASIS BRIEF SUMMARY OF SECOND THOMPSON-GROMYKO TALK GIVEN DEPTTEL 1921, MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF SOVIET MOVE TO MAKE OBVIOUS THE FIRMNESS OF THEIR POSITION ON BERLIN APPEARS TO BE TACTICAL RELATIONSHIP OF THIS ACTION TO DECEMBER 27 MEMO ON SOVIET-GERMAN RELATIONS. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, GERMANS WERE UNIMPRESSED BY MEMO, AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE MAINTAINED THEIR RELAXED ATTITUDE HAD GROMYKO SPUN OUT SLOW-PACED AND LOW-KEY TALKS. BUT SOVIET RETURN TO HARD LINE SEEMS DESIGNED TO EMPHASIZE THAT DECEMBER 27 PAPER IS A REALISTIC BID FOR BILATERAL SOVIET-GERMAN NEGOTIATIONS TO SETTLE BERLIN PROBLEM AND IMPROVE RELATIONS. IT MAY ALSO HAVE CONSEQUENCE OF PERSUADING GERMANS OF CORRECTNESS OF THEIR INITIAL ASSESSMENT RE RUSK-GROMYKO AND HOME-GROMYKO TALKS (EMBTTEL 843), I.E., THAT SOVIETS ARE SEEKING ONLY TEMPORARY SOLUTION FOR BERLIN ISSUE--PERHAPS INDEED ONLY SEPARATE TREATY AND NOT AGREEMENT WITH WEST--IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO USE IT AND GERMAN QUESTION AS LEVERAGE TO IMPROVE THEIR POWER POSITION IN CENTRAL EUROPE. IN OTHER WORDS, SOVIET MOVE SEEMS CALCULATED TO FACE GERMANS WITH CHOICE OF MAINTAINING THEIR PRESENT FOREIGN POLICY--WITH RISKS TO GERMAN NATIONAL INTERESTS WHICH SOVIETS INSIST THIS ENTAILS--OR OF "REALISTIC" ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET DOMINANCE IN EUROPE AS BASIS FOR BEST POSSIBLE DEAL AND FUTURE COOPERATION OF "TWO GREATEST STATES IN EUROPE."

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Reviewed by: Elijah Kelly Jr.

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-2- 1671, JANUARY 15, 11 PM FROM BONN

IN MY ESTIMATION, IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS TO ASSURE GERMANS OF OUR RESOLUTE REJECTION OF GROMYKO'S IDEAS. WE THINK BEST WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS WOULD BE TO ENCOURAGE GERMANS TO REPLY PROMPTLY AND VIGOROUSLY TO DECEMBER 27 MEMO; THIS WOULD HAVE ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGE OF BEING GOOD INSTRUMENT FOR SETTING FORTH PUBLICLY MAXIMUM WESTERN POSITIONS. FOLLOWING A FIRST INITIAL INCLINATION TO IGNORE SOVIET MEMO, FONOFF IS NOW CONSIDERING ADVISABILITY OF REPLY, AND I FEAR HESITATION ON OUR PART WOULD ONLY ENCOURAGE THOSE ELEMENTS OF GERMAN OPINION FAVORABLE TO AN INDEPENDENT INITIATIVE TO ARGUE AGAINST FORECLOSING ANY AVENUE FOR PROTECTION OF GERMAN INTERESTS.

IN BRIEF, INITIATIVE LIES WITH US. I AM CONFIDENT GERMANS WILL FOLLOW OUR FIRM LEAD.

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